

**Technical Assistance Site Visit Draft Report
Housing Authority City and County of Fresno
Fresno, CA**

I. BASIC SITE INFORMATION

Addresses: Housing Authority City and County of Fresno
1331 Fulton Mall
Fresno, CA 93776

Phones: (559) 443-8408

Contacts/Titles: Edward L. Stacy, Executive Director
P.C. Candidate, Director Housing Choice Department & CEO of Family Self Sufficiency Corps, Inc.
Ruxana Lotia, Assisted Housing Manager, Housing Option Division
Martha Cabellero, Assisted Housing Manager, Education Services Division

Date of Visit: December 19, 2003

TA Provider: Chanel Smith, The Nelrod Company – CA Welfare to Work Sites

WtW Program Size: 1504

As of December 31, 2003

Current number of vouchers under lease: 1560

Total Number of FSS Participants: 1560

II. SITE VISIT REPORT

A. Site Visit Activities

The site visit to the Housing Authority City and County of Fresno occurred on Friday, December 19, 2003. The meetings took place at the Housing Authority and the Human Service Office.

The meeting participants were:

Housing Authority City and County of Fresno

- Edward L. Stacy, Executive Director
- P.C. Candidate, Director Housing Choice Department & CEO of Family Self

Sufficiency Corps, Inc.

- Ruxana Lotia, Assisted Housing Manager
- Martha Cabellero, Assisted Housing Manager, Educational Services Division

Human Service System**Department of Employment and Temporary Assistance**

- Patti Williams, Staff Analyst
- Cynthia Quintana-Perez, Job Specialist
- Chester Prince, Social Services Program Supervisor

The Nelrod Company

- Chanel Smith, WtW Technical Assistant Provider
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B. Challenge

In order for any WtW programs to be successful, housing authorities need to provide a variety of supportive services related to self sufficiency. It is important for the housing authority to partner with other service agencies and programs in order to coordinate the necessary resources to maximize program benefits.

C. Solution

The Housing Authority for the City and County of Fresno were able to recognize the importance of creating a strong partnership between the WtW and FSS program in addition to the Human Service System and various community partners. Some of the partnerships include: surrounding colleges/universities, area banks, United Black Men of Fresno, Workforce Connection, One by One Leadership, Fresno Rotary, Housing Assistance Corporation Consumer Credit Counseling Services, Citibank and AT&T Media Service.

Fresno's FSS program is designed to assist families in utilizing community resources to achieve self sufficiency through education and job training. Through this program WtW families benefit from specialized case management, GED and/or vocational certification, tenant education, and credit counseling/repair etc.

This site has also created an ancillary program called Building Stronger Families (BSF) that provides a variety of activities which encourages, maintains and strengthens family unity and relationships. All WtW families are encouraged to participate. Some of the activities include: an annual picnic, arts and crafts, Cinco de Mayo and other holiday celebrations.

The TA provider had the opportunity to visit the site on December 19, 2003, to witness first hand one of the many programs their FSS program has to offer. The 6th Annual BSF Holiday Celebration sponsored by Citibank included a dinner for over seven hundred families. This fun-filled evening included live entertainment with the children's choir singing Christmas carols, a magic and puppet show and Toys for Tots sponsored by the U.S. Marines.

The magnitude of this event was more than impressive especially considering a few years ago in its inception it was held in a board room at the housing authority for about 50 participants. Fresno anticipates having to utilize an even larger space to accommodate the growth of the event for Christmas 2004.

During the event, TA provider made particular notice to the number of Housing Authority, church, community and Citibank volunteers who worked hard to make the evening a success. Notable also was the fact that Fresno welcomes and opens its doors to anyone wishing to participate in the event. The site has no apprehensions about feeding additional families.

During the course of the year, Fresno maintains a calendar filled with events for FSS participants. Some of which include:

- Coffee Talk-focusing on topics such IDA services, healthcare, employment etc.
- An Annual FSS Benefit Dinner to recognize and honor successful FSS participants
- Walk-a-thon
- Job development , budgeting, tenant education, parenting, homeownership and conflict resolution workshops
- Holiday Activities

D. Implementation

While participation in the FSS program is voluntary, Fresno realizes the importance of combining the resources and goals of the two programs and encouraging participation. Fresno's requirement that WtW families participate in a self sufficiency program has allowed the site to maintain 100% WtW participation in the FSS program.

Fresno is able to manage a program of such magnitude largely because of the support received from several sources. For instance, Fresno is in the second year of its WtW/FSS contract with the Human Services System. While the number of case managers has been reduced to eleven (8 through the NOFA and 3 through HSS), Fresno still manages to maintain the program.

Fresno meets monthly with the Human Services System, Employment and Temporary Assistance and HSS to ensure collaboration between agencies and to ensure there are no duplicates of services. Although, these two organizations established this collaborative over 10 years ago, the WtW program has certainly enhanced its partnership.

Fresno's FSS Programming Coordinating Community (PCC), namely the FSS Corp is instrumental in promoting, expanding, marketing and coordinating with community organizations to provide services to FSS participants. Recently, the PCC gained its 501c (3) non-profit status thereby allowing them to apply for endowment money and filter it into separate funds. For example, the support (miscellaneous) fund allows residents in dire need to apply for money for emergency purposes such as car repairs, tuition fees, school books, etc. In addition, the FSS Corps is also a United Way endorsed agency.

The success of a program largely relies on the support of its directors. The TA provider had an opportunity to meet with Executive Director of the Housing Choice Department P.C. Candidate who did not simply appear but participated in the Christmas event. It was evident by her presence and her familiarity with the parents and children in the program that she along with the rest of the staff has a great deal of interest in the success of the families. Ruxana Lotia, Assisted Housing Manager basked in glory not because of her unbelievable effort in coordinating such a successful event but rather in pride of her staff's diligent work and also the joy of the participating families.

E. Results

Through the sites hard work and community outreach, the WtW and the FSS program will continue to grow and provide the services needed to assist families in their endeavors to become self sufficient.